When Lardner did not return my earlier call yesterday I left a message on his machine in the afternoon suggesting that he consult his 9/9/78 story. That is the one in which Quinn said that the original JFK case bullet ffagments had disappeared and had been replaced by those he could not account for. Ooops! wrong clipping. See over.

Body of Evidence: Clues Buried With John Connally

JFK Assassination Theorists Sought Bullet Fragments

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By Joel Garreau and Jason Vest
Washington Post Staff Writers

Even as John Connally was being laid to rest yesterday, the controversy over who shot JFK wasn't.

Assassination investigators of all persuasions embraced the idea of removing one or more tiny bullet fragments from Connally's body even as that body was being interred in the State Cemetery in Austin, Tex.

"This is science as opposed to speculation," said Ron Rosenbaum, a frequent writer about the Kennedy assassination.

"It is one of the finest opportunities we've ever had," said a former staffer on the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations who, in the time-encrusted tradition of conspiracy theorists, insisted on anonymity. "It is the one piece of physical evidence the chain of custody of which is not questioned. It has always been in Connally's body."

Connally was riding with President Kennedy when he was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. A bullet called "Warren Commission Exhibit 399" has been identified as coming out of Lee Harvey Oswald's Car-

Connally

FRAGMENTS, From B1

cano rifle. The Warren Commission concluded that this bullet, called "the magic bullet" by some, hit both Kennedy and Connally almost simultaneously before Kennedy was hit by another, fatal bullet.

"The significance of what we're attempting to do is that these fragments must have come from that bullet according to the Warren Commission," said Cyril H. Wecht, the past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and a vocal critic of the Warren Commission. "They cannot have come from anywhere else. It is the linchpin of the sole assassin conclusion. Everybody on both sides agrees."

If the fragments thought to be in the former Texas governor's body were proven to come from "399," then that "basically shows that the shot that hit Connally came from the Depository's sniper's nest," said Josiah Thompson, author of the 1967 book "Six Seconds in Dallas." "Three-ninety-nine, the oddest bullet in history, did what the Warren Commission said it did."

If tests were to show that Connally was not hit by "399," or if the fragments turned out to have more mass than is missing from "399," then the logic becomes overwhelming that Oswald did not act alone.

George Christian, who was Connally's press secretary that day in November, was nonetheless outraged yesterday by those urging that the corpse be searched for evidence. Christian, who was serving as a Connally family spokesman, said: "I flat can't understand it. It's very offensive to come up on the day he dies and threaten to go to court. It really is outrageous. I think it ought to be dropped right now. It's just so bizarre to do something like this."

James H. Lesar, head of the nonprofit Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington, urged Attorney General Janet Reno immediately after Connally's death to have the fragments removed.

However, even Mark Lane—who in 1966 wrote the best-selling "Rush to Judgment," a critique of the Warren Commission, and who says he hates being called a "conspiracy theorist," found the proceedings "macabre and ghoulish."

"It's not necessary to gather more evidence to prove either that more than three shots were fired that day or that the world is round," Lane said. But he added: "I think we all understand that millions of Americans believe the government of the United States at the highest possible level has not been truthful about the murder of President Kennedy. While doubt exists, it is appropriate to look at all the evidence."

Oliver Stone, director of the movie "JFK," issued a statement that said: "If the Warren Commission defenders . . . are as sure of themselves as they profess to be, they should be spearheading this effort to obtain these fragments. This is their golden opportunity to prove their case. How come we haven't heard from them?"

The reason investigators had not urged that the tiny fragments be removed before Connally's death, Wecht said, was that the surgery involved could have crippled Connally's wrist.

Thompson, meanwhile, was still upset yesterday that Connally had died; Thompson had a few last questions he had wanted to ask.